

March 8th, 2021

Dear Senator Mae Flexer (Co-Chair), Representative Dan Fox (Co-Chair), Senator Rob Sampson (Ranking Member), Representative Gale Mastrofrancesco (Ranking Member) and esteemed members of the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee:

My name is Dominique Johnson and I am a voter from Norwalk. Passing HB 6578 with expansion of Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) beyond the Dept. of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to other state agencies is a common-sense reform that saves taxpayer money and helps increase democratic participation. This bill codifies AVR, just like we already have now at the Dept. of Motor Vehicles, into state law and I applaud that first step. I believe we should also expand AVR to the Dept. of Social Services (DSS), HUSKY, Access Health CT, state colleges and universities and other state agencies. Access to the ballot box should not be dependent on your zip code, income, or housing status.

Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) will enhance the security and integrity of our elections by eliminating outdated addresses and duplicative registrations through an automatic process—which will deliver the most accurate voter rolls to cities and towns. Eliminating duplicate registrations significantly reduces the workload for localities that could be susceptible to confusion on election day.

77% of Connecticut voters support Automatic Voter Registration in a recent Secure Democracy public opinion poll. Across the country, localities have saved an average of about \$3.54 in labor costs per registration by moving from a paper to an electronic method. Nineteen states have versions of AVR. Restoring the right to vote to people re-entering their communities on parole is also extremely important to me because disenfranchising people on parole sustains a racist system of inequality in our state. Those on parole are concentrated in only a handful of Connecticut communities that are predominantly the home of Black and Latinx residents of our state. Connecticut has the most stringent criminal disenfranchisement laws in the Northeast and it is the only state in the region that still prohibits those on parole from casting a ballot. 20 states allow people on parole to vote and just two weeks ago New York's state senate voted to restore voting rights to those on parole. Connecticut can not continue to further disenfranchise former felons and deny them equal access to the ballot.

Lastly, passing SB 1017 is also absolutely necessary so that voters currently qualifying to vote absentee retain the freedom they had in 2020 to use their town's official, secure ballot drop boxes. I urge you to pass HB 6578 but with expansion of Automatic Voter Registration beyond the Dept. of Motor Vehicles to other state agencies—and I urge you to pass SB 1017.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Dominique E. Johnson  
Norwalk, CT